

# White Paper

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Project Director: Jenna Duggan Lay

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**NEH Next Gen Planning Grant**  
**Lehigh University**  
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**Section I: What Happened**

In fall 2016, our core committee met four times, and we held two joint meetings for core and consulting committee members. In spring 2017, our core committee met three times. Three working groups (campus-based internships; professional internships; new models for the dissertation) were active over the course of the year, and one additional working group (advisory council and mentoring network) will likely meet over the summer. Graduate students were involved in all of these activities: our graduate core committee members and working group members were important participants in our conversations and—in the case of the campus-based internships group—were vital to the creation of focus group lunches and surveys that solicited feedback and participation from graduate students who were not on the grant committees.

On the core committee, we worked to develop a set of short- and long-term goals and self-evaluation mechanisms to assess our progress in planning and implementation over the course of the next few years. The core committee was particularly interested in exploring a planning process to develop a student-centered 6-year PhD program that includes 12-month funding, career and professional development opportunities, and a holistic advising/mentoring framework that appropriately recognizes all contributions. If we decide to pursue an implementation grant in the future, this planning process would be a necessary intermediate step—and we hope that learning more about the results of the summer opportunities for graduate students funded by the grant will prove helpful in our consideration of 12-month funding and professional development structures.

The core committee also—and perhaps most importantly—worked to create connections across departments and units at the university. Given our size, these partnerships will be essential to the further development of curricular and co-curricular opportunities for our students. The core committee was a space for exploring challenges and opportunities—both what we hold in common across departments and units, and what we might be able to offer one another. What do we wish we could do that we’re not doing now? What is preventing us? We hope that these conversations and the community fostered through them will provide a framework for addressing future challenges in the ongoing work of both the history and English departments.

Since our project proposal was designed around piloting a series of funding opportunities in order to test new ideas in humanities graduate education, some of our assessment will necessarily take place after our grant period has concluded—and we are excited to learn about the results of this summer’s funded projects. The working groups on professional internships and new models of dissertation research helped the core committee to develop the parameters for these opportunities, and drafted the calls for proposals. We were able to offer fellowship opportunities to nine Lehigh graduate students: four Lehigh NEH Next Generation Ph.D. Summer Dissertation Fellowships and five Lehigh NEH Next Generation Ph.D. Summer Internship Fellowships. For detailed descriptions of the students’ projects, please see Section II: What Worked and What Didn’t. We will have initial feedback on these summer fellowships by September 2017, when the students will provide reports on their activities.

In addition to the grants outlined in the proposal, we are working on the development of more thorough tracking information (the graduate student hired as the coordinator of grant administration has been leading this effort), which we will use to develop an advisory council for the History and English departments and a mentoring network for humanities graduate students. This summer, we hope to contact alumni with requests to contribute to these projects, and to develop a draft set of guidelines for participation in the mentoring network and contributions to the advisory council. We look forward to learning more about the results of the CGS Understanding PhD Career Pathways for Program Improvement project, which would help us to further develop these efforts.

**NEH Next Gen Planning Grant**  
**Lehigh University**  
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Our working group on campus-based internships explored the ways that graduate assistantship opportunities in a range of units on campus benefit graduate students in the humanities; assessed how departments and the university can improve these experiences, for both students and administrators; and compiled a working list of the relevant opportunities currently available. To gather data, committee members met with staff and faculty that work with graduate students in these roles, as well as graduate students who have been employed on campus outside their home departments. They conducted targeted lunches with key staff members, faculty, and students, and they surveyed graduate students who either have had or would be interested in holding positions outside their home departments. In general, they found that such positions benefit staff by supporting the on-going projects and programming of specific offices: for many staff members interviewed, graduate student expertise can allow them to expand programming or develop new programming depending on the skill set of the student. For students, they found that these positions can provide work experience outside of the classroom that allows them to envision other possible careers in higher education or fields beyond the major area of study. The group also developed a set of recommendations that we will incorporate into our white paper for Lehigh's administration at the close of the grant period (see Section IV: What's Next for more information).

**Major participants in the grant activities included:**

Core Committee

Lynn D'Angelo Bello, Associate Director of Graduate Student Career Development

Chris Campbell, Ph.D. Student in History and IT Consultant

Sarah Heidebrink-Bruno, Ph.D. Student in English and Graduate Assistant in the Women's Center

Kathleen Hutnik, Associate Dean for Graduate Student Life

Jenna Lay, Director of Graduate Studies and Assistant Professor of English—Project Director

Tamara Myers, Associate Professor of History

John Savage, Director of Graduate Studies and Associate Professor of History

Alan Snyder, Vice President and Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Studies

(ex-officio) Christine Hill, Ph.D. Candidate in History and Coordinator of Grant Administration

Working Group Members

Kimberly Carrell-Smith, Professor of Practice in History and Director of the Community Fellows Program

Kate Crassons, Associate Professor of English and Director of Lehigh University Press

Cynthia Estremera, Ph.D. Candidate in English and MLA Connected Academics Proseminar Fellow

Mary Foltz, Associate Professor of English and Interim Director of the South Side Initiative

Teri Haddad, Senior Vice President of Education and Production at PBS 39

Amy Hollander, President and CEO of the National Museum of Industrial History

Rita Jones, Director of the Women's Center

Jackie Krasas, Associate Dean of Interdisciplinary Programs and International Initiatives in the College of Arts and Sciences

Emily Shreve, Ph.D. Candidate in English and Graduate Assistant in the Office of First-Year Experience

Sarah Stanlick, Director of the Center for Community Engagement

## **Section II: What Worked and What Didn't**

One of the most exciting parts of the grant is still underway: our students are pursuing reciprocal community partnerships and innovative dissertation research with summer funding included in the grant budget. Four students were awarded summer dissertation fellowships: two students in English and two students in history. One student in English is pursuing a dissertation focused on restorative justice practices and feminist literary theory, and grant funding will support both her summer research on this exciting dissertation project and the tuition for a summer training course at the International Institute of Restorative Practices. Another student in English is completing a dissertation on alternatives to violence in U.S. war literature from 1861-2012. This student is himself a veteran, and the conclusion of his dissertation incorporates his public humanities work with veterans: in summer 2016, he hosted a reading group that brought together veterans and civilians in the Lehigh Valley to discuss military heroism in literature, film, and popular culture. He has also collaborated on the Veterans Empathy Project. These public humanities projects, and the narratives he has compiled through them, enable him to make a case for the importance of literary representation to processing the experience of war. One student in history is working on a dissertation on the significance of emotional bonds for soldiers who fought in the American Revolution. Funds from the grant will support her work with pension records from the period and enable her to create a digital database that will be available to other interested scholars. The other history student's dissertation examines Kentucky's place in the early American republic; he is using the fellowship funding to develop a website that explores the challenges of constructing and fighting for rights on the frontier in the early Republic.

Five students (three history; two English) were awarded funds to support summer internship projects with local non-profit organizations. One history student is partnering with the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor to design and author a walking tour that follows the Hugh Moore Park Trail. This walking tour will address the area's industrial heritage and stress the human connection to historical events by incorporating human agency and experience into the larger narrative of anthracite coal mining, transportation, and industrial production. Another history student is working with the Berks History Center to document the social and cultural value of the archival collections and present that information to the public in order to stimulate greater research into the history of Berks County. He is working with the communications director at the Berks History Center to develop short narratives about the collections that can be presented through social media and blog posts over the course of the next year to draw research attention to the library. He'll also be developing a public presentation on his results. The final history student is working with Historic Bethlehem Museums and Sites to integrate multiple manuscript collections and create finding aids to enhance public accessibility of important cultural heritage materials. This internship—like many of these partnerships—offers experience in how historical sources may be communicated to the public in order to encourage engagement with local history.

One of our English students is working with the Moravian Archives to support the *Moravian Roots* initiative, which involves the transcription and editing of Moravian church registers. This student brings expertise in nineteenth-century American literature, print culture, and the digital humanities to his work with the project, and the archivists have asked him to coordinate and compile the volunteer transcription efforts that have fueled the project to this point. This internship will enable him to develop experience in public digital projects and archival access for a broader and often non-academic audience. The other English student is working on communications, marketing, and programming efforts at Banana Factory, a local community organization that is seeking to engage with literary and literacy programming. This student is documenting the organization's programming and contributors, and learning more about a non-profit community organization that promotes meaningful civic engagement. We were particularly excited to see students apply for the internship opportunities early in their doctoral careers, as this suggests that

**NEH Next Gen Planning Grant**  
**Lehigh University**  
**Project Director: Jenna Lay**

these experiences may have a transformative impact on their future work—including their potential dissertation projects and future opportunities for intellectual and professional development. We expect to learn a great deal from the students' reports at the end of the summer grant period, and to survey the longer term results of their efforts—both for the students and our community partners—in one year and in five years.

Another exciting aspect of the grant was the community it created: not only on campus and in the Lehigh Valley (through our committee's activities and funding opportunities for graduate students), but also with colleagues at other institutions that received NEH Next Gen grants. Our project director appreciated the opportunity to participate in an informal meeting at the Modern Language Association conference in January and to travel to Washington for the project director's meeting. Conversations at those meetings led a group of doctoral students to join the project director on her trip to Binghamton University for the Dr. Who? Careers Conference supported by their NEH Next Gen Planning Grant. This was a wonderful opportunity for our graduate students to learn and to network, and it further reinforced that a similar event at Lehigh could be effective as we look ahead. One of our PhD students, Dana McClain, wrote a blog post about her experiences at the Binghamton event: <https://drownunbound.com/2017/06/01/dr-who-dr-you-career-advice-for-the-professional-humanist/> Another student was subsequently invited to MLA headquarters by Stacy Hartman, Project Coordinator of Connected Academics (whom she met at the Binghamton event), to discuss her dissertation project—and new models of dissertations more generally—with MLA staff. The community created through the webinars, the project directors meeting, and opportunities to meet at professional conferences was an excellent—an unexpected—benefit of receiving the grant, especially in the opportunities it has created for our graduate students.

If we were to rewrite the project proposal today, we would include fewer elements and streamline our goals for the year. We engaged in this streamlining process over the course of the year, as certain elements of the project developed through participants' interest and others languished, but it would have been helpful to start with just two or three major goals for the year. Ultimately, we cut the course planning grants that were originally included in the grant proposal (with permission from NEH, we were able to redeploy these funds to support our ninth summer grant opportunity): this was too much to manage with the summer funding opportunities for students, and we found that faculty were already developing courses geared toward graduate student professional development without the need for grant support to stimulate their interest. The English department, for example, will pilot a new introduction to graduate study in the fall, which will build on many of the things learned through the grant process (incorporating, for example, the Imagine PhD website and the department's ongoing relationship with the Career and Professional Development Office). The history department will pilot a series of professional development workshops, and we have also discussed partnering on future professional development programming across departments.

We found that a strong relationship between faculty and senior administrators was essential to the conversations we developed in the core committee meetings, and this partnership strikes us as crucial to the success of a grant like this one. With a faculty director for the grant, we would also look into further administrative support structures if we were to apply again. Having a graduate student serve as the Coordinator of Grant Administration created an excellent professional development opportunity for the student, but the learning curve for a one-year grant meant that such a position would have been more effective if it had incorporated a thorough training and orientation period at the very beginning of grant activities—or if the position was paired with a staff member who could devote an hour or two a week to training and check ins.

**NEH Next Gen Planning Grant**  
**Lehigh University**  
**Project Director: Jenna Lay**

We also found the timeline to be very compressed, and we wonder if these grants could be 18-month opportunities in the future—or if an additional one or two months of lead time could be provided between notification of the grant award and the initiation of the project (with the November application date, this might already be the plan!). With just a month to put all of the pieces in place before the start of the semester, we struggled to maintain our initial calendar. We might advise future grantees to consider which elements of the project might go forward even without NEH funding (our core committee meetings, for example), and to plan for those regardless of whether the funding is awarded. Perhaps this might mean that NEH opens the grant community—and the webinars—to unfunded institutions that pursue activities in parallel with the funded institutions?

Even in cases where we encountered challenges or found elements of the initial proposal that didn't work in practice, we learned a great deal about how we can work together to support our graduate students and create communities committed to the public significance of advanced study in the humanities.

### **Section III: What Does It All Mean?**

While it is hard to fully reflect on the impact of the project before the conclusion of the grant period, we hope that the description of our grant activities and of the students' projects outlined above indicates the potential impact of our work on students, faculty, administrators, and community partners. Our potential impact on alumni remains to be seen, as we work to initiate the mentoring network and advisory council—but we have already seen the impact of bringing English alumni to campus and holding video conferencing events with former students. One of the faculty members in English who served on the grant committee describes these opportunities as transformative for her own understanding of what doctoral education can be and what it offers our students, and we hope to increase that impact by developing a symposium on these issues based on our conversations on the core committee (see Section IV: What's Next).

The most immediate impact of the grant was to provide nine humanities graduate students with summer funding, which Lehigh does not provide. These \$4000 grants are relatively low cost, but they enable our students to devote time to dissertation research or to an internship project related to their doctoral education instead of finding a part-time (or full-time) job unrelated to their degree in order to support summer living expenses. The fact that five of these grants also involve a partnership with a local cultural organization also means that the impact extends beyond individual students into our local community—and that it has the potential to extend even further, as the partner organizations use and disseminate the results of the student internships (see Section IV: What's Next for more on how we are working to communicate our students' experiences to a broader audience).

The grant also enabled the English and history departments to partner on a shared goal: to support our students as they contend with a changing academic and professional world. This, too, will likely have long-term impact, but most immediately it allowed us to work together on identifying resources to confront shared challenges. There are still members of both departments who have concerns about how new modes of professional development might influence the future of doctoral education, and this year was invaluable for thinking through those anxieties and considering how best to move forward. Rather than thinking of the current state of doctoral education in terms of problems that need to be solved, the core committee attempted to explore possibilities that our current situation might enable, and to take what many have identified as a moment of crisis as a moment instead for critical reflection and imaginative pragmatism.

**NEH Next Gen Planning Grant**  
**Lehigh University**  
**Project Director: Jenna Lay**

We hope to have the opportunity to expand upon this section of our white paper at the conclusion of all grant-related activities.

**Section IV: What's Next**

In order to help faculty see the benefits of new models of doctoral education in the humanities and raise the profile of humanities graduate education at Lehigh, the core committee wishes to hold a two-day symposium at Lehigh, inviting graduate alumni (including members of the advisory council), career professionals at organizations that might hire humanities PhDs (especially local organizations that have hosted our students for internship projects), and faculty and staff from other institutions that have developed programs and curriculum around these issues. The goal of this symposium would be to share ideas *and* concerns, through both talks and workshops—and to bring faculty to the table who might have reservations about new models of graduate education. We were especially excited to see the model Binghamton used for their career symposium, and we would likely draw on their experiences as we plan our own event. During the 2017-18 academic year, we seek to secure funding for the event and send out invitations.

We will also be reading and discussing our students' reflections on their summer funding opportunities. In particular, we hope to communicate the impact of these opportunities both to senior administrators and to potential donors. To that end, we are working with staff in Lehigh's communications office to develop a story on the students' projects (following up on this earlier story about the grant:

<https://www1.lehigh.edu/news/english-and-history-departments-receive-neh-grant>). We will share any articles that result from these fellowships with NEH, and we will notify NEH staff if we are successful in our efforts to garner administrative and donor support to fund similar projects in future years.

In addition to the white paper we are submitting to NEH, we plan to prepare a white paper for our senior administrators, including the president and provost, to briefly communicate the grant process and its impact. This document is intended to increase administrative awareness of and support for humanities graduate education at Lehigh: with evidence of the results of this year's summer dissertation fellowships and internship fellowships—as well as a summary of recommendations from the core committee and the working groups—we hope to draw attention to the elements of our programs that are working well already and to how administrative support and targeted resources would enhance these programs in the future. The NEH grant has made a report of this kind possible, and we are very grateful for the opportunity to demonstrate to our administration how relatively small amounts of money and strategic partnerships can make a big impact for our students. We will also be developing a white paper for the history and English departments, with similar information and a set of recommendations for future development of both programs.

In an effort to further communicate both the broader importance of the NEH and the impact of this particular grant, our project director spoke at a recent Pennsylvania Humanities Council event with Congressman Charlie Dent, where she shared the significance of NEH funding for students and cultural heritage organizations in our local community. Our project director is also hoping to write an essay or op-ed on what the NEH funding enabled and on the opportunities available through advanced study in the humanities. She is also an active participant in the Association of Departments of English Summer Seminars for department administrators, where she has communicated the work of the NEH on these issues and the invaluable support of CGS in developing a community around the grant.

**NEH Next Gen Planning Grant**  
**Lehigh University**  
**Project Director: Jenna Lay**

This summer we will work toward implementing our mentoring network and advisory council, and this project will likely be ongoing through the next year, as the English and history departments will need to approve the implementation of a graduate alumni advisory council. We will also be incorporating other elements of what we learned through the grant conversations and through the webinars into our graduate programs, and developing a planning process for a student-centered 6-year PhD program that includes 12-month funding, career and professional development opportunities, and a holistic advising/mentoring framework that appropriately recognizes all contributions.

We very much appreciate the support of NEH and CGS this year, and we are eager to sustain the momentum that this planning grant has offered us over the course of the next few years. We may look ahead to an implementation grant at some point in the future, while also advocating for further support for humanities graduate education both locally and nationally. We look forward to our fall reporting opportunity, when we will have more to say about the results of our summer activities!